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ABSTRACT

Good citizens need good communication skills, and the task is left to departments of communication to give students the communicative skills they need to take part effectively in a participative democracy. This paper presents a short discussion of the pedagogical issue that is of supreme importance for the citizens of democracies--the issue of how to incorporate ethics into public speaking instruction. The paper argues that most western public speaking texts provide students with a typically goal-oriented western approach to public speaking ethics and recounts one educator's efforts to ameliorate this with the inclusion of the Hindu ethical work, the "Bhagavad Gita," into his public speaking courses. The paper initially explores an excellent and representative public speaking text by Beebe and Beebe (2000), paying particular attention to the portrayal of ethics within it. It then gives some general information on the narrative context in which the "Bhagavad Gita" finds itself. Finally, it discusses the uses that the "Bhagavad Gita" can be put to in regard to these typical portrayals of public speaking. The paper ends with some remarks on how to actually employ the text in a classroom setting. Appendixes contain an ethics assignment and in-class discussion questions. (Contains 21 references.) (NKA)

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Communication Ethics and Citizenship: Utilizing the *Bhagavad Gita* in Western Public Speaking Courses

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S. Stroud

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Introduction

The ability to effectively communicate in the public sphere is a crucial skill for effective citizens and their leaders. While our secondary schools, colleges, and universities attempt to build an educated citizenship through a multitude of knowledge-based courses, little attention is paid to the *techne* of effective communication. Indeed, scholars such as Habermas (1984; 1996) indicate that the communicative practices of a collection of individuals are constitutive of their knowledge formations and epistemic processes. In short, good citizens need good communication skills, but our education system seems to focus on knowledge of ideas. Thus, the task is left to departments of communication to give our students the communicative skills they need to effectively take part in a participative democracy.

Once this task is taken up by such institutions as the communication discipline, however, other important choices emerge. For instance, in light of the power that results from increased communicative ability, how are our students going to act? How are teachers of public speaking going to teach the ethics of public speaking? This paper presents a short discussion of this pedagogical issue that is of supreme importance for the citizens of democracies—the issue of how to incorporate ethics into public speaking instruction. I argue that most western public speaking texts provide our students with a typically goal-oriented western approach to public speaking ethics. I will recount some of my efforts to ameliorate this with the inclusion of the Hindu ethical work, the *Bhagavad Gita*, into my public speaking courses. This paper will initially explore an excellent and representative public speaking text by Beebe and Beebe (2000), paying particular attention to the portrayal of ethics within it. Second, some general information on the narrative context the *Bhagavad Gita* finds itself in shall be given. Finally, the uses that the *Bhagavad Gita* can be put to in regard to these typical portrayals of public speaking ethics shall be discussed. The paper will end with some remarks on how to actually employ the text in a classroom setting.

Western Public Speaking Ethics

Western public speaking texts are remarkably similar in the important aspects of speech writing procedures, delivery instructions, and in how they portray the ethics of public speaking. This is no unique flaw of current textbooks; indeed, Aristotle starting the field of public speaking down this path long ago with his conception of rhetoric as "the power to observe the persuasiveness of which any particular matter admits" (Aristotle, 1991, p. 74). This study will focus on the short presentation of ethics in a very popular public speaking textbook, Beebe and Beebe's (2000) *Public Speaking: An Audience Centered Approach*. This textbook presents the

issues of ethics in such a way as to avoid the discussion of foundational claims, and when these foundations are actually discussed, it links them to a goal-oriented consequentialist basis.

While this section will summarize and illustrate these tendencies in this text, most other texts in the western tradition suffer from this same malady. The very purpose of speaking seems to imply this consequentialist ethic. Lucas (1998), Verderber (1991), and other speech texts always include sections on audience analysis—albeit justified by the pragmatic standards of consequence and efficacy. Jaffe (2001) displays the emphasis placed on this, stating in the introductory section, "The skills needed for *effectiveness* in these two roles—as speaker and as listener—are the focus of this text" (p. 4, emphasis added). The word "effectiveness" is obviously a teleological term in this context; one is seen by such texts as being *effective* in achieving some end. Lucas (1998) even recommends that students be led in a visualization exercise to imagine how their vocations might call upon them to "shine" with their public speaking skills. Taking a similar lead, Adler and Rodman (2000) point out that "effective speaking" is equivalent to "Influenc[ing] your audience to accomplish your goal" (p. 301). The western view of public speaking is summed up in their dictum that in order to "influence your listeners . . . you have to change them in some way" (p. 301). Thus, public speaking courses and texts often extend this notion of goal orientation and of bringing about change in the audience that is congruent with the wishes of the speaker.

Beebe and Beebe (2000) include a 12 page section titled "Ethics and Free Speech" in the most recent edition of their text. While some interesting cases are discussed in relation to free speech legislation in the United States, this section will ignore those issues, as they do not relate to the normative grounding of ethical speaking principles. While Beebe and Beebe define "ethics" in a satisfactory manner, they set the tone of the following sections as those grounded in consequentialism, or worse, those without grounding. For instance, they state, "Although we cannot, therefore, offer a universal definition of ethical public speaking, we can offer principles and guidelines that reflect the ethics of contemporary North American society and the legal guarantees granted under the U.S. Constitution" (p. 42). One must ask, *why* should these traditions and rules of society be followed? Indeed, in the spirit of ethical communication that provides listeners with warrants and reasons for pronouncements, this section now turns to an examination of the principles and their justification (or lack thereof) that Beebe and Beebe provide.

Initially, the principle of "*Have a clear, responsible goal*" (p. 45) is put forward as an ethical guideline. A speaker is told to reveal to the audience the goal of their speech, so as not to violate "your listeners' rights" (p. 45). One must ask, "What rights are at issue here and why

should a speaker respect them?" Indeed, Beebe and Beebe provide little normative justification for why an ethical public speaker must inform the audience of their goal and not coerce them into believing the speaker. Some mention is made of constitutional protection of all ideas, but the fact still remains that this argument lacks an ethical framework from which it can justify such protections, ethical mandates, etc.

A second principle in Beebe and Beebe's section on ethics is "*Use sound evidence and reasoning*" (p. 45). They state, "Ethical speakers use critical thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation to draw conclusions and formulate arguments. Unethical speakers substitute false claims and manipulation of emotion for evidence and logical arguments" (p. 45). The justification for this guideline seems to be consequentialist in nature; the compulsory "Hitler example" is used as proof that manipulation through emotions can lead to dire consequences. Better outcomes are to be reached when speakers use evidence and reasoning that is accessible to public scrutiny in their speech. All the needed information is provided such that the audience can make a sound decision. While this is more of a justification for the normative aspects of this chapter than the first guideline discussion provided, it still is infested with the Aristotelian bias toward the "most effective means of persuasion."

The third principle is "*Be sensitive to and tolerant of differences*" (p. 46). Beebe and Beebe ultimately seem to place a teleological spin on this norm, justifying with statements such as, "it can also help a speaker to select a topic, formulate a purpose, and design strategies to motivate an audience" (p. 46). Again the emphasis is placed on a speech being effective in achieving its goals; the end seems to be influence of the audience through the ethical considerations of audience-centeredness and sensitivity. For a speaker to be sensitive to and tolerant of differences in the audience is for that speaker to be in a better position to construct and deliver an effective speech.

The fourth principle is "*Be honest*" (p. 46), which is followed by a related principle, "*Avoid plagiarism*" (p. 47). Speakers are told to be honest in their speeches due to the harms it could bring to the speaker; the example of the Lewinsky-Clinton fiasco is broached, with the impact of "few[er] [Americans] could forgive the dishonesty" (p. 47). Honesty is conceptualized in consequentialist terms—one should be honest because it prevents awful results (perhaps even destroys the effectiveness of one's speech). In a related light speakers are told to avoid plagiarism because of similar damning consequences; two cases are retold, with the individuals having "violated their ethical responsibilities [by plagiarizing] and paid the price for that violation with their reputations" (p. 47). Reputations and projects (such as one individual's attempt to

secure a presidential nomination) are destroyed by plagiarism; this ethical guideline seems to exist to protect one from these undesirable consequences while speaking.

In summary, this short chapter in Beebe and Beebe's text espouses several presuppositions in relation to the ethics of speaking. I discover five such assumptions. First, the public sphere is composed of *atomic individuals pursuing their own projects and goals* (A1). Each person is attempting to speak by themselves to others in a public setting. Second, *each individual should be free and informed in making decisions* (A2). Thus, the audience is to be provided with enough true information to make a rational choice in regard to their beliefs, actions, etc. Third, the *goal of public speaking is to affect the world – to adapt it to one's desires* (A3). The speaker is an individual who sets out to change the actions or behaviors of some audience; even in regard to entertainment, he or she wishes to affect some goal-oriented change in the audience (i.e., to make them happy, sad, etc.). Fourth, *actions incurring non-desired consequences are unethical (or at the least, rationally unadvisable)* (A4). This is evidenced by the chapters on audience-centered approaches to speech writing and ethical guidelines that highlight the attainment of desired consequences; why speak to an audience if this action results in effects counter to your goal or wishes? Finally, *actions that are not effective in reaching one's goal are not rationally advisable* (A5). One speaks for a purpose, according to Beebe and Beebe, and this goal must be realized in order for the speech to be as effective as it should be—thus, speech tactics are discouraged that may result in alienating the audience or in causing audience inattention to the message at hand. With the ethical guidelines of this text explicated, this paper now examines the use of the *Bhagavad Gita* in correcting this very western approach to normative issues of speech.

Utility of the *Bhagavad Gita*

This section discusses how the *Bhagavad Gita* can be integrated into western public speaking courses. The context of this ancient Hindu text will first be examined, followed by a discussion of how it can temper the assumptions implicit in such texts as Beebe and Beebe's.

Context of the *Bhagavad Gita*

The *Bhagavad Gita* is an ancient eastern text that has been the leading emissary of Hindu ideas to the Western world. Minor (1986) indicates that it is the most translated book in the world after the Bible. It also was reputed to be Gandhi's favorite text, one that he read on a daily basis. Radhakrishnan (1998) adds that it is the most popular religious poem in Sanskrit. Deutsch (1968) and Zimmer (1989) argue that it is a significant piece of Hindu philosophical work because it synthetically combines many previous themes into its narrative. Some of these themes include the illusory nature of the phenomenal world, the self, and issues of dharma (duty) that are

prevalent in Hinduism (Cross, 1994; Smith, 1986). The *Bhagavad Gita* begins as a martial narrative about a localized war and quickly transforms into a dialogue transcending any particular context of human existence (Neufeld, 1986).

It is important to realize that this relatively short work is situated in the midst of a longer, more literary work entitled the *Mahabharata* (Babbili, 1997). This epic is eight times larger than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined. The focus of this larger work was a power struggle between two factions of a warring family, the Kurus and the Pandavas. Eventually, this family is drawn to war; it is at this point that the *Bhagavad Gita* begins. Set against the backdrop of war, the dialogue between Arjuna (a Pandava) and Krishna (his charioteer) provide the audience with access to ideas covering all human existence. Arjuna begins to question whether he should fight his own family, even if the war appears to be for a just cause. Krishna counsels him, and the dialogue focuses on this thematic persuasion.

This work is laid out in short verses, which shall be cited by book/discourse number and verse number (i.e. 9:23). While many excellent translations exist for the *Bhagavad Gita* (Deutsch, 1968; Edgerton, 1995), this paper shall refer to the translation by Easwaren (1985). The Johnson (1994) translation is also noteworthy because it has a fairly limited amount of commentary included; this could be helpful if one wants his or her students to think through the text on their own, without the "answers" being provided by the translator.

Thematic Use of the *Bhagavad Gita*

While this paper lacks the space to discuss the entire ethical/metaphysical framework of this Hindu text, some remarks can be made and textual indices can be contrasted with the above assumptions resident in Beebe and Beebe's text. An important theme in the *Bhagavad Gita* is that the ultimate nature of reality is ultimately interconnected. This foundation challenges (A1), which sees speakers as atomic individuals pursuing their individual goals through discourse, and provides a justification for (A2), which indicates the goal of speech as enabling rational decision-making by the audience.

The *Bhagavad* Gita conveys the important message that one should see him or herself in others; the individual self, contrary to our western heritage, is seen as an illusion blocking enlightenment. This insight into the nature of humanity and existence can be valuable for the empathy that is due to an audience of a public speaking situation. In this text, the real meaning of one's "self" is conceived in relation to the "ultimate" Self, personified by Krishna in human guise. It is this Self that is described as "The Self of all beings" (2:30). Krishna continues this explanation by saying "I [Krishna as the personification of ultimate self] am ever present to those who have realized me in every creature...all life [is] my manifestation" (6:30). Even the

creatures themselves (including humans) are all fundamentally united with the ultimate Self: "I am the true Self in the heart of every creature, Arjuna, and the beginning, middle, and end of their existence" (10:20).

Krishna is arguing that humans deny their ontological unity with all things because of this illusion of ego individuation. Krishna exclaims to Arjuna that "I am time, the destroyer of all; I have come to consume the world. Even without your participation, all the warriors gathered here will die...I have already slain all these warriors; you will only be my instrument" (11:32-33). Arjuna is too attached to the illusion that what happens with his physical body on this empirical battlefield is real; Krishna is revealing to him the ultimate Self that lies within every part of this phenomenal world. Krishna counsels Arjuna to accept the reality of the ultimate, undivided Self in all; "He alone sees truly who sees the Lord the same in every creature, who sees the Deathless in the hearts of all that die" (13:27). The message here is that our individuation, a key element in the speaker-message-audience process model, is an obstacle to living well. The solution, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, is to see oneself in all others.

This metaphysical conception of reality is diametrically opposed to (A1), through which Beebe and Beebe assume atomic individuals separated from others. Instead of solely relying on appeals to "treat the audience nice or they will not be persuaded/listen to your message," ethics discussions could instead begin with the more sensitive empathy embodied in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Indeed, the audience becomes one with the true Self of the speaker; they are, at an advanced metaphysical level, an intimate extension of the speaker. It is only when the divide between speaker and audience is reified that issues of how much deception and strategic manipulation are acceptable even arise. If the audience is really an extension of the speaker, then ethical treatment of the audience is warranted because they are a part of the speaker.

The pragmatic import of this metaphysical foundation can be seen when it is used to provide a justification for Beebe and Beebe's (A2), which arises in contexts of manipulation, deception, and plagiarism. If one sees himself or herself in their audience, then there are reasons to treat them with kindness, empathy, and consideration while delivering a speech. Instead of making content understandable for purely pragmatic purposes, students of public speaking should craft and deliver their speeches with the intention of recognizing *their* humanity in their audience and in appealing to that noble quality. For instance, the attitude of a speaker presenting a persuasive speech against abortion should not be to "overcome" or "subdue" the "hostile" impulses of his or her pro-choice audience, but instead should embody a whole-hearted desire to communicate a reasoned truth with these reasonable people. If the speaker does a good job at presenting his or her thoughts, his or her audience should accept the speech and its invitation to

change, just as the speaker would hope he or she could be swayed to attitudinal change by reasoned discussion. Recognizing ourselves in our audience can lead to heuristic reflections on what it means to be an ethical speaker; just as the *Bhagavad Gita* cautions against selfish action, it also holds insights into why we should long for communicative interaction, as opposed to strategic manipulation of others through the instrument of speech (Habermas, 1999). One is inherently similar, if not metaphysically identical, with his or her audience; this attitude and its implications should be cultivated in public speaking students through the insights offered by the *Bhagavad Gita*. Thus, a justification can be provided for *why* (A2) is a guideline for ethical speaking.

Presuppositions (A3), (A4), and (A5) embody Beebe and Beebe's commitment to a typically consequentialist relative of Aristotelian rhetoric. While this goal-oriented aim is a key element in the civic use of public oratory, insights on a desirable attitude within the speaker can be gleaned from the *Bhagavad Gita*. This text, on the other hand, provides a radically different reading of action that can offset the simple default to these western assumptions.

In this text, Krishna counsels Arjuna that "You have the right to work, but never to the fruit of work. You should never engage in action for the sake of reward, nor should you long for inaction. Perform work in this world, Arjuna, as a man established within himself—without selfish attachments, and alike in success and defeat" (2:47-48). The belief in the primacy of one's self, as mentioned above, is attacked here; Krishna points out that the empirical illusion of the self should prompt one toward acting within this world, but without selfish attachments to the consequences of one's action. The question becomes, how can one act in a speech situation without concerns for goals, success, and his or her ends?

Sartwell's (1993) analysis of the *Gita*'s conception of action provides a way out of this paradox. He argues that even inaction is considered action by this text—Krishna states "there is no one who rests for even an instant; every creature is driven to action by his own nature" (3:5). Sartwell (1993) argues that Krishna suggests "it is not that we act wholly and always without ends; that would make human action impossible. Rather, we ought to reconstrue the *relation* of means to ends in our actions . . . our action should not be performed *merely* for the sake of the end; the end must not absorb or expunge the means in our deliberation" (p. 97). Our sole focus on ends in action is amply illustrated by Sartwell's (1993) arguing that

> If we could achieve the end by sheer force of will, if we could realise it without performing the means, we would. Krsna [Krishna] asks us, not to renounce all desire and thus all action, but to desire the means as intrinsically valuable as *well* as valuable in service of the end. The means are not to be absorbed in the end; the time and energy

devoted to the means are not wasted. Rather, this time and energy are to be *consecrated*. (pp. 97-98)

Human action, far from being a stranger to goal-orientation, must be seen a holy, worthy undertaking that also gives us value. Valuing action only so far as it achieves a certain end transforms that spent time into *wasted* time if the goal is not achieved.

This conception of action directly challenges the consequentialist leanings of (A3), (A4), and (A5). Teachers of public speaking must try to capture this insight of action in their attempts to frame the very act of speaking in the public sphere; the students must see the value to speaking above and beyond the goal-oriented approached proffered by so many texts. As Sartwell summarizes, "If one devotes one's life to achieve such ends, one has wasted one's life up to the moment the end is achieved. If one succeeds, one has been absent from one's life up to that point . . . if one *fails* to achieve such ends . . . one has not been *present* in one's life at all, but has lived in devotion to a moment that has never arrived" (p. 98). The value in public speaking lies not only in the ability of one to persuade or move others to action or belief (A3); this would leave the act of speaking meaningless if the goal was not achieved (A4)/(A5). Following the lead of the *Bhagavad Gita*, students should be instructed that the means of speaking are intrinsically valuable and, as such, should be considered a "ritual" to be revered. The very act of constructing a speech and delivering it to one's own satisfaction can be an act of empowerment; for instance, one may feel duty-bound to protest a war perceived as unjust, even though such a speech will not change the majority's opinion. The very act is a sacred offering to both our socially implied duties as a citizen and as a rational human; indeed, one could say we do not respect our humanity in the persons of others if we do not stand up for what we believe in, regardless of the results.

A stronger stance could be conveyed, however, that the giving of a speech is an art, a creative act that has value above its ability to affect an audience. If this idea can be conveyed to a western audience, as career-oriented as they are, the attitudes for giving speeches can be changed from emphasis on an effective tool for personal empowerment (persuasion, informative, etc.) to a mode of being. Career and personal goals can be chased through the "tool" of public speaking, but the *Bhagavad Gita* seems to reserve an intrinsic enjoyment of the speech by the speaker, regardless of the results upon the audience. Thus, speaking students could be implored to enjoy the adrenaline rush of speaking, the fortune of a "captive audience" to their views (as is such in the classroom), and the opportunity and power to express themselves in this social environment they find surrounding them. It is this attitude that allows for enthusiastic and ethical citizen communicators in a participatory democracy.

Pedagogical Remarks

The *Bhagavad Gita* can be effectively employed in a typical public speaking course, especially in relation to the section on ethics. This work is not too long for supplemental use, so I believe it is acceptable to assign it over the course of a few weeks. One can have the students read it in its entirety and then return to it in class discussion, or if warranted by student understanding, proceed through the work chapter by chapter with class discussions on certain sections of the text. In my courses, I have required that the entire text be read, a short paper be written, and then in-class group discussions be held. This approach is, of course, prefaced with a preliminary lecture of the narrative context of the text, the characters, select vocabulary, etc.

My purpose in using this text in a public speaking course is not to educate my students about all the facets of this complex ethical treatise, but instead to draw some connections between the ideas in it and the ideas that the class may already accept, albeit with western justificatory structures. For instance, many students will agree with the moral intuition that lying/dishonesty is wrong (immoral); the use of the *Bhagavad Gita*, however, can expand the reason for why this behavior is seen as wrong. For instance, instead of dishonesty being immoral because it could cause people not to believe you in the future (a consequentialist justification), the *Bhagavad Gita* could highlight the intuition that humans are fundamentally interconnected and deserve significant amounts of respect. Thus, lying would not only be a non-desirable action in regard to consequences, but one could be failing to show respect to an essential extension of him or herself, the "other." Citizenship could have much worse in the way of foundations than this communicative and ethical respect of all individuals as not truly separate from each other.

In my community college public speaking courses, I require the *Bhagavad Gita* to be read over the course of a few weeks. Appendix 1 is the writing assignment I require my students to complete before any sustained class discussion occurs. I do this as a check against students ignoring the task of reading the text and also to draw attention to the ethical implications of the text. Not only do I want them to write on the major ethical positions of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but I also require them to compare its stances with their own values and beliefs. In this way, a later dialogue can be had in regard to how the students and their respective cultures differ from this ancient Hindu text in regard to ethics. The last two questions on this writing assignment ask that the student find some possible areas of contradiction in the text and attempt to reconcile them. This text uses many contradictions, some of which can be transcended in terms of the text's argument and some of which are more problematic. At any rate, if the students can critically examine this text and some "logical trouble spots" within it, application of it to public speaking contexts can later occur with less of an "authoritative" air (i.e., the text will not be used as the

"be-all-end-all" of ethics discussion). Instead, the text is seen as a non-western perspective that explains why a person should act a certain way in communicative situations; these guidelines and their justification can also be seen to be very similar and very different in certain respects to the students' received notions of morality.

After this assignment is examined, I can use a few classes (or portions thereof) to discuss the ethical implications of this eastern text. Instead of lecturing on the connection between this text and the citizenship situations the audience member will find him or herself in, I use small group discussion and class discussion to let the students develop their own ideas on how the text can be used in the context of public speaking ethics. Appendix 2 is a copy of the in-class discussion questions that I use to guide the small groups in their conversations about the utility of this text in public speaking ethics. While little in the *Bhagavad Gita* overtly addresses issues of communication, the general ethical guidelines and metaphysical statements can be applied to the actions of speech in a public setting. While I want them to discuss their own interpretations and applications of the text, I bring the class discussion back to some important concepts, such as the ultimate unity of all beings and the idea of selfless action. My purpose is not to convert the students to a certain ethical system or to convince them that this text has the "right answers;" instead, I want to use a culturally diverse text to complement the western ethics presented in typical public speaking texts. In doing so, I allow for discussion about the justification for such ethical guidelines as listed by Beebe and Beebe (2000) and allow for some interesting descriptions of the metaphysical setting of public speaking situations.

Conclusion

In all, western public speaking courses and their texts extend the tradition of ethics that was initiated by Aristotle. In following his conception of rhetoric as the use of *techne* to gain audience compliance, modern texts are exposing students (in the best case) to consequentially justified ethical systems, and in the worst case, to unjustified lists of ethical behaviors and unethical behaviors. This paper has argued that the ancient Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, can be employed in western public speaking courses as a supplement in regard to the topic of public speaking ethics. Some of the major assumptions of modern texts have been discussed, facilitated by an analysis of Beebe and Beebe's (2000) excellent public speaking text. The *Bhagavad Gita*'s themes of ultimate unity among beings and ethical action being selfless both act to temper such treatments of ethics as given by texts such as Beebe and Beebe's. Some of my pedagogical tactics have been discussed in an effort to facilitate further use of this Hindu text in public speaking courses. In doing so, instructors can help the discussion of ethics in regard to a powerful and important part of citizenship—the art of public speaking.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Assignment

Directions:
This assignment asks you to read the *Bhagavad Gita* and reflect one what its message is in regard to how one is to behave, act, think, etc. I won't be grading you on grammar, spelling, etc.; instead, I want to see if you have read the text, understood important parts of it, and can explain to me your views on it. This short book is around 80 pages, so you can't read it the night before; read it all, or your grade will suffer.

Please number the sections of your paper and type out responses to the questions I ask. Avoid making claims without any support; tell me why you believe this or that, why you think the *Bhagavad Gita* is saying this or that, etc. Refer to specific ideas or parts of the book (quote some lines if you want) in order to explain and support your answers. The total length of this paper should be 3-4 pages, typed, 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced.

Questions:

1. What is the *Bhagavad Gita's* message concerning action? What is ethical behavior, what is behavior that is unethical? What does it say about duty? Use some quotations or specific examples from the book to support and explain your answer.

2. What are some views in the *Bhagavad Gita* that agree with your views on things such as God, ethical behavior, duty, war, etc. (or any other things you agree with in the book)? Explain how these views are similar to your views.

3. What are some views in the *Bhagavad Gita* that contradict with your views on things such as God, ethical behavior, duty, war, etc. (or any other things you agree with in the book)? Explain how these views differ from your views.

4. How could some of these views (the ones you agree with and the ones you disagree with) be combined? Try to explain to me how one could find both of these views to be true about ethics, God, action, etc.

5. Point out some lines/ideas in the Bhagavad Gitas that contradict each other (things contradict when you can't see them both as true at the same time; for instance, gambling is moral, but you shouldn't gamble because you would be evil). Tell me why these lines/ideas in the book don't seem to go together; how can they be reconciled (are they referring to different things, did the views of the character change, etc.). Explain your answer.

There are no right or wrong answers, just ones that are better supported and explained. Put some effort, thought and time into this assignment and it will be an easy 10% of your grade.

Appendix 2: In-Class Discussion Questions

In-Class Discussion Questions: The *Bhagavad Gita*

You will be assigned a group. Once in this group, arrange for at least one person to write down some thoughts your group has on each of these questions. Appoint one person as the "reporter;" after the small groups are brought back together, this person should be prepared to say what their group thought about each one of the questions. Make sure everyone contributes to discussing these questions in your small group—I will be walking around to provide assistance and to make sure everyone is discussing the questions.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What direction/guidance can a public speaker get out of the *Bhagavad Gita*? Why should one speak? How should one speak?

2. What would the *Bhagavad Gita* say about the relationship between the speaker and the audience?

3. Keeping in mind the *Bhagavad Gita* and its conception of correct action (how one is to act), how should a speaker approach his or her speaking task? What about the results of this speaking task?

4. Do you think the *Bhagavad Gita* allows for deception in public speaking? Why or why not?

5. Are there any parts of this dialogue (ideas, arguments, recommendations) that you find as unethical? If so, why?